Bearer of the Sword

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IN THE IMMEDIATE aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, U.S. President George W. Bush and his national security leaders articulated objectives for a wide-ranging war against terrorism. Months later, these objectives remain focused on destroying international terrorist centers, dismantling terrorist networks around the world, and punishing states that support terrorist activities. The al-Qaeda terrorist organization—sponsors of the 11 September attacks and earlier terrorist assaults on U.S. people, property, and interests—remains a high priority. As al-Qaeda's principal bases and leadership cadres in Afghanistan were attritted and its Taliban supporters driven from power, U.S. planners began to direct resources and focus to other al-Qaeda cells and associates operating in dozens of countries around the world. U.S. national leaders emphasized that these groups, and other terrorist organizations, constitute legitimate targets in the global war on terrorism.

Among those targets receiving early attention from U.S leaders was a small, violent Islamic group that, despite origins in the 1979-89 Soviet-Afghan war, operates in the jungles, hills, towns, and coastal waters of the southern Philippines.[1] This group is Abu Sayyaf, meaning "bearer of the sword" in Arabic. It has become noted for ambushing government forces, kidnappings, piracy, and frequently beheading captives. As this is written, Abu Sayyaf elements remain engaged in sporadic clashes with the Philippine Armed Forces and continue to perpetrate a mixture of political terrorism and banditry throughout the area. Its purported links to al-Qaeda and its asserted devotion to a radical, perverted form of Islam identify the Abu Sayyaf group (ASG) as a vector of local terrorism that also has broader regional and international implications. Of particular concern is the prospect of further radicalizing other Muslim insurgent and proindependence groups in the Philippines and serving as a catalyst for analogous developments in Indonesia, Malaysia, and elsewhere.

While the ASG may now be both a criminal enterprise and an ideologically motivated insurgent group, the message of Islamic extremism in populations seeing little prospect for material improvement could be especially seductive. Traditional Moro independence groups, militants, and armed insurgents may become radicalized.

This article addresses the origin and activities of Abu Sayyaf, the operational environment in which it carries out its activities, and its influence on the Philippines and the region. Before examining Abu Sayyaf specifically, it is instructive to review briefly the historic continuity of Muslim insurgency in the Philippines; the U.S. experience in what was, 100 years ago, a new operational environment; and the current context in which Abu Sayyaf has sought to advance its goals.

Moros, Insurgency, and the Operational Environment

Twenty-first century Islamic insurgency in the Philippines, in many respects, is continuing a struggle that began in the 15th and 16th centuries. Islam arrived in the southern Philippines in the 14th century, spread aggressively from the Indonesian Archipelago by seafaring Muslim traders and teachers, and by the 16th century, had spread throughout the islands of the Sulu Archipelago into Mindanao, pushing farther north. These Islamic communities, constituting the southern Philippines, were based on their own developing concepts of authority, social relationships, and sovereignty.[2]

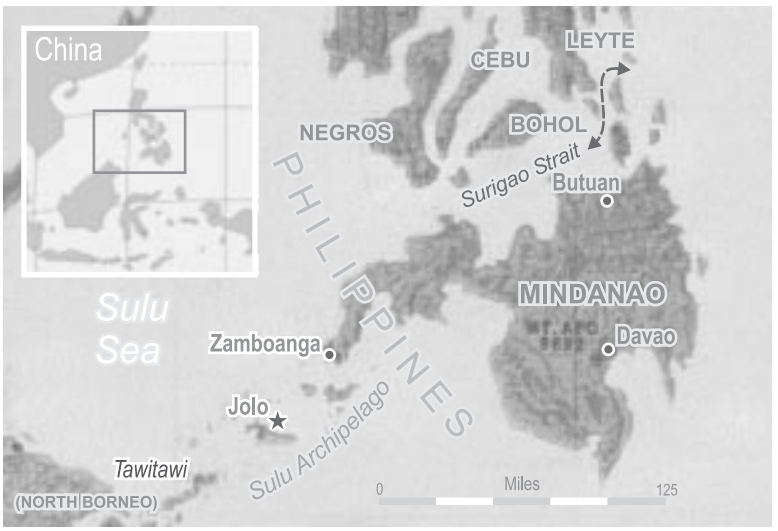
These communities collided violently with Spanish explorers seeking to establish lucrative colonies in the area based on supposed rich resources, trade

routes, and a population converted to Catholicism. The Spanish called the Muslim people they found there Moros, or Moors, reflecting their old Muslim enemies in Europe and North Africa.[3] While Islam was pushed southward and constrained by Spain, an armed, effective Moro resistance began immediately. It continued until 1898 when the United States defeated the Spanish in the Spanish-American War. The Moros emerged in 1899 with religious and cultural identities intact and, at the very end, enthusiastically wiped out isolated Spanish garrisons before U.S. forces arrived to take over.

U.S. Military Meets the Moros

The Philippines were ceded into the United States under the 1898 Treaty of Paris, sparking resistance immediately in the predominately Christian north and later in the Sunni Muslim south. The 1899-1902 Philippine Insurrection in the north was successfully put down and declared officially ended on 4 July 1902.[4] U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt noted in the declaration of termination, however, that "peace has been established in all parts of the archipelago except in the country inhabited by the Moro tribes, to which this proclamation does not apply."[5] Full-fledged conflict in the south had broken out just 2 months earlier in May, following a series of incidents, rising tensions, and Moro resistance to incorporating Muslim lands into the Philippine state under U.S. control. As Moros saw it, "Catholic Spain had been driven by the spirit of the Inquisition, America was inspired by the unholy doctrines of 'Manifest Destiny' to bring the 'blessings' of western civilization to these 'barbarians' in Southeast Asia. But the Moro 'barbarians,' much to the Americans' surprise, were not easily subdued."[6]

The latter judgment was clearly an understatement as the U.S. Army and Navy found themselves engaged with an enemy who quickly earned a place as one of the bravest, most dedicated, and resourceful adversaries yet encountered. It also highlighted for the U.S. military the impact of Islamic religious fervor mobilized in pursuit of what many Moros still consider their wholly earned and justified right to independence. Moros were poorly armed compared to U.S. soldiers whose basic weapon was the .30-caliber Krag-Jorgensen rifle—M1892 and M1896 models with a 5-shot magazine—backed up by Gatling and Hotchkiss guns and several models of light cannons. Moros possessed a variety of older weapons, including muzzle-loaders and some primitive brass cannons. It was the Moros' skill and surprising effectiveness in using edged weapons that generated the greatest respect and fear, however. U.S. troops came to recognize and understand the capabilities of the barung with its 1½-foot leaf-shaped blade; the 3½-foot kampilan long sword, traditional fighting weapon of the Maguindanao and Maranao Moros; and the sword most identified with the Moros, the kris, a superb weapon of varying length that had a distinctive wavy-edged blade that became famous at the time.[7]



Islam arrived in the southern Philippines in the 14th century, spread aggressively from the Indonesian Archipelago by seafaring Muslim traders and teachers . . . [and] collided violently with Spanish explorers seeking to establish lucrative colonies in the area based on supposed rich resources, trade routes, and a population converted to Catholicism. The Spanish called the Muslim people they found there Moros, or Moors, reflecting their old Muslim enemies in Europe and North Africa.

Moros were extremely effective at jungle, forest, and swamp ambushes and also fought well from their forts, called cottas, or kutas. Moro attacks on moving columns or sleeping encampments were sudden, often involving bloody hand-to-hand fighting, as kris- and spear-wielding Moros closed quickly with better-armed Americans and used their edged weapons and spears to great effect. As one specialist from the period notes, "American troops had not participated in such fighting since Revolutionary War days."[8]

Traditional problems associated with counterinsurgency operations appeared early on. For example, distinguishing Moro male combatants from females, who sometimes were combatants as well, was an enduring problem since women were attired in much the same way as male fighters. In an effort to reduce noncombatant casualties, U.S. Army

US Army

US Army

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US Army

(*Top left*) A Moro warrior captured by U.S. soldiers.

(*Above*) Brigadier General John J. Pershing leading the 8th Infantry and Philippine Scouts during the Battle of Bagsak Mountain on Jolo Island, 11-15 June 1913. After the bitter fighting, Pershing wrote the Adjutant General that he did not believe he was entitled to the Medal of Honor for which he was being considered.

(*Left*) The aftermath of the 4-day Battle of Bagsak Mountain.

orders forbade firing on groups of Filipinos that contained women. This order prompted one derisive soldier rhyme, a la Rudyard Kipling, that captured the way some troops saw the dilemma: "If a lady wearin' britches is a-hidin' in the ditches, an' she itches fer me ears as souvenirs, Must I arsk, afore I twists 'er, 'air you miss or air you mister?' How shall a bashful man decide the dears?"[9]

Another phenomenon many U.S. military and other official observers noted was the extraordinary vitality of many Moro fighters and their capacity to continue forward even after being shot multiple times. While attributable in large measure to the character of a brave and determined warrior people, there is another dimension rooted in the Moros' practice of Islam. In various forms, that practice has resonance today in the suicide attacks, or constructive self-destruction, around the world that Muslim fighters undertake in varying interpretations of Qur'anic imperatives to oppose infidels.[10]

Juramentado and Jihad

Americans quickly became more familiar with this dimension, which the Spanish earlier had learned well—Spanish soldiers and officials called it juramentado, roughly translated into "oath-taking." This practice, based on Sulu Moro interpretations of jihad, consisted of elaborate dedication and purification rites conducted with family and religious authorities. Those who went through this dedication swore to kill as many Christians as possible before dying, their reward being ascent into paradise. A lone juramentado would attack an entire group, and the sudden assaults of those "running juramentados" became a constant concern. From the Muslim view, this description was far from adequate. Rather, as contemporary Moro Islamic insurgent spokesmen describe it, "The Bangsamoro mujahideen took it as a personal duty to Allah to continue to fight to the death, even if a Muslim leader surrendered. It became common for a lone Muslim mujahid to attack American soldiers and camps, killing many of them before losing his life. The Spanish and Americans disparagingly called this act juramentado or amok; Muslims refer to this as sabil or prang sabil, from the Arabic jihad fi sabilillah."[11]

Accounts abounded of seemingly peaceful Moros suddenly drawing kris or barung and killing multiple American soldiers or civilians before being killed themselves. Replacing the .38-caliber U.S. Army revolver with the harder-hitting .45-caliber automatic was in part a result of the difficulty in stopping juramentados. U.S. military officials unable to find other effective countermeasures implemented other practices that reportedly yielded short-term results but likely generated longer-term negative consequences. Governor of Jolo, Colonel Alexander Rodgers, was said to have carried out one such approach. All Moros who ran juramentado were killed and laid out in the marketplace with slaughtered pigs placed above them. The Mohammedan abhors all contact with pork, so the dead juramentados' contact with the pigs neutralized the beneficial effects of the rite itself. The Moros came to know Rodgers as "The Pig," and juramentados hurriedly fled to other districts.[12]

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To 21st-century Filipino commentators, the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon immediately suggested juramentado. One observer noted: "the decision of the [11 September] hijackers to kill as many people as possible and have themselves killed in the process is reminiscent of the Muslim juramentados in Zamboanga and Jolo in the southern Philippines during the American colonization of the islands in the early 1900s."[13]

Continuing Moro Armed Resistance in the 20th Century

Moro engagements with U.S. forces continued periodically from the first pitched battle in 1902 until the official end of military rule in 1913. The interruption of World War I, an interwar period that saw increased local northern Filipino jurisdiction over Moro affairs, and Japan's occupation of the Philippines in World War II shaped and frustrated Moro aspirations for independence. The Moros fiercely resisted Japanese occupiers, but in the postwar granting of the Philippines' independence on 4 July 1946, the Moros found themselves incorporated into the Republic of the Philippines. Over the next decades, there was continued Moro resistance to this integration. Government-sponsored migration of Christian Filipinos to traditional Muslim lands in the south and what Philippine Muslims saw as the massive transfer of land titles from Moro peoples fueled this resistance. Current Moro resistance

spokesmen draw a parallel with this influx of Filipinos from the north and the "policies enacted by 'Israel' against the Palestinian people."[14] The government and the Christian north emphasized threats to the Moros' Muslim identity.

Moros assert their marginalization by the government in other forms—local investment, education, health care, access to the justice system, and other complaints—were added to traditional aspirations for independence. Violent Christian gangs, in collusion with local constabularies and especially the Jabidah massacre on 18 March 1968, played catalytic roles in growing Moro militancy during Ferdinand Marcos' presidency. The Philippine Army killed at least 28 Moro recruits on Corregidor Island. These recruits—in the Jabidah Special Forces—were undergoing training in unconventional warfare with the alleged aim of seizing the disputed Malaysian state of Sabah on the island of Borneo under a plan code-named Operation Merdeka. The Moro recruits were allegedly shot for refusing to obey orders and to keep them from revealing details of the operation.[15]

In the post-Afghan war days, bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization reportedly funneled money and other support to the ASG, although the precise nature of the aid is not known. As early as the mid-1990s, bin Laden's brother-in-law, a Saudi financier named Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, was alleged to be one of the principal vectors of funding to the ASG and perhaps other Philippine Muslim insurgent groups as well.

One direct result of this event was the clandestine formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in late 1969. Moro students studying at universities in the Philippines, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Middle East who were dedicated to creating an independent Muslim nation in the south Philippines formed the MNLF.[16] The MNLF gained foreign support from Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and from the governor in Sabah, Malaysia, who supplied arms and other aid from Libya as well as training for Moro youths. Bolstered by foreign arms and supplies, by the mid-1970s, the MNLF had perhaps 30,000 men under arms and had been engaging Philippine Army units and police in the Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao. Initial successes began to fade by late 1975; however, a leadership change in Sabah state limited resupply and effective government amnesty programs. Nevertheless, a cease-fire in 1976 and the establishment of a provisional autonomous, but not independent, Muslim zone in the south Philippines seemed to signify real gains for the MNLF. Subsequent backing from Iran in the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution also bolstered the MNLF's international support.[17]

In 1979, a short-lived rival group designated the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization was formed under the leadership of expatriate Moros based in Saudi Arabia. In 1977, a leadership split in the MNLF resulted in a breakaway organization that, by 1983, adopted the name of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).[18] The MILF, though smaller than its predecessor, also had substantial numbers of armed combatants.[19] For a time, these three Muslim organizations sought primacy as representatives for the Moro people, punctuated by low-level clashes, cease-fires, and discussions among their members and the Philippine Government.[20] This complexity was accompanied by another development far removed geographically—the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan war in December 1979—that would eventually generate another, more radical, Muslim insurgent group in the Philippines—the ASG.[21]

Abu Sayyaf: From Afghanistan to the War on Terrorism

While accounts of the ASG's formation vary in detail and interpretation, it is roughly agreed that Moro founder and first leader Abdurajik Abubakar Janjalani was studying in the Middle East when he fell under the influence of the Wahabi theology espoused by Professor Abdul Rasul Abu Sayyaf. The Afghan, and ethnic Pashtun, professor was a follower of the puritanical Saudi Islamic sect—named for its 18th-century founder Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahab—that branded other Muslim sects as heretical.[22] After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Abu Sayyaf, said to be a kind of swashbuckling, charismatic figure, formed a mujahideen group in 1986 that operated near Kabul against Soviet forces. Designated the Islamic Union, radical Saudi Arabian Wahabi backers heavily financed the group, and it aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood. It became an important part of the centralized effort Jordanian Palestinian Abdullah Azam began in about 1984 to bring in foreign Muslim fighters and support. Financial and other support was often filtered through Muslim charities.

The ASG was reported to have trained some 20,000 foreign mujahideen fighters. Many of them trained at a camp near Peshawar, Pakistan, that prepared fighters from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Philippines. Janjalani himself arrived in Afghanistan in 1986 and reportedly joined Sayyaf's

US Army

Moro guerrillas on the Philippine island of Jolo stand inspection for Major General Jens A. Doe, commanding general of the 41st Infantry Division, April 1945.

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Islamic Union. He probably received his training at a Sayyaf camp and appears to have stayed in Afghanistan as a mujahideen until the end of the war. Like thousands of non-Afghan Muslims, including Egyptians, Saudis, Algerians, Chechens, Uzbeks, Kuwaitis, Uighurs from Xinjiang in China, and others, Janjalani was determined to help drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. With that goal achieved in February 1989, most foreign mujahideen veterans scattered to Muslim countries around the world. As is well documented, many of them became part of insurgent and armed opposition groups waging jihad against regimes seen as heretical or as having been too influenced by the West.[23] Support networks and ties established in Afghanistan endured and developed, coming to play roles in attacks on U.S. lives, property, and interests around the world over the next decade.

Between 1989 and 1990, Janjalani appears to have left Afghanistan and returned to his Basilan Island home in the Philippines just across the narrow strait from the Mindanao capital, Zamboanga.[24] He and many other Afghan Moros returned from the Afghan jihad with a view to duplicating Afghanistan's success—in this case, establishing an independent and assertively Muslim state in the southern Philippines. Some returning Moro mujahideen joined the MNLF, and others joined the MILF.[25] Janjalani, however, believed in a so-called "pure" form of Islam on the Wahabi model. In his Basilan hometown of Tabuk, it was said that there was an old world atmosphere in which the women wore black and the men wore either gray or white.[26] He set about with a few followers to establish a new insurgent group that he dubbed Abu Sayyaf, evidently to be resonant of his Afghan mentor. Dissident elements of the MNLF led by a man with similar views, a religious teacher named Wahab Akbar, joined him in this endeavor.[27] From a group with an initial membership of about 20 and the goal of establishing a pure Islamic state in Mindanao, the ASG grew to at least several hundred members and made its presence felt in Basilan, the Sulu Archipelago, and some parts of Mindanao.[28]

The ASG impressed itself on the public consciousness with its brutal bombings, murders,

assaults, and ambushes as well as robberies, extortion, and kidnappings that have become its trademark. One sizable ASG element being pursued by the Philippine Armed Forces and backed by U.S. material aid and possibly advisers still holds two missionaries from the Wichita, Kansas, area and a Filipino nurse.[29] The ASG also draws on the strong Moro maritime heritage, operating as successful pirates in Philippine coastal waters and sometimes farther from home. Filipino commentators have drawn parallels between legendary Sulu pirate Jikiri of the early 20th century and Abu Sayyaf. After years of successful depredations ostensibly carried out on behalf of Moro rights, Jikiri was killed in a hand-to-hand battle with a U.S. officer on the island of Patian.[30] Today, commercial shipping enterprises fear that the ASG and other groups will turn their attention increasingly to the soft targets that maritime carriers present.[31]

As the unraveling of the Taliban regime accelerated in mid-November 2001 under the impact of U.S. and Northern Alliance attacks, Moros were reported to be fighting near Kabul with Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. They are evidently sprinkled among the thousands of al-Qaeda prisoners and dead left in the wake of the successful U.S. and allied operations.

The Philippine Army and police have scored successes against the ASG, including killing its founder, Janjalani, in a December 1998 gun battle and capturing or killing other leaders and members. Khaddafy Janjalani, younger brother of the founder and named for the Libyan leader who has supported Moro causes, now heads the ASG.

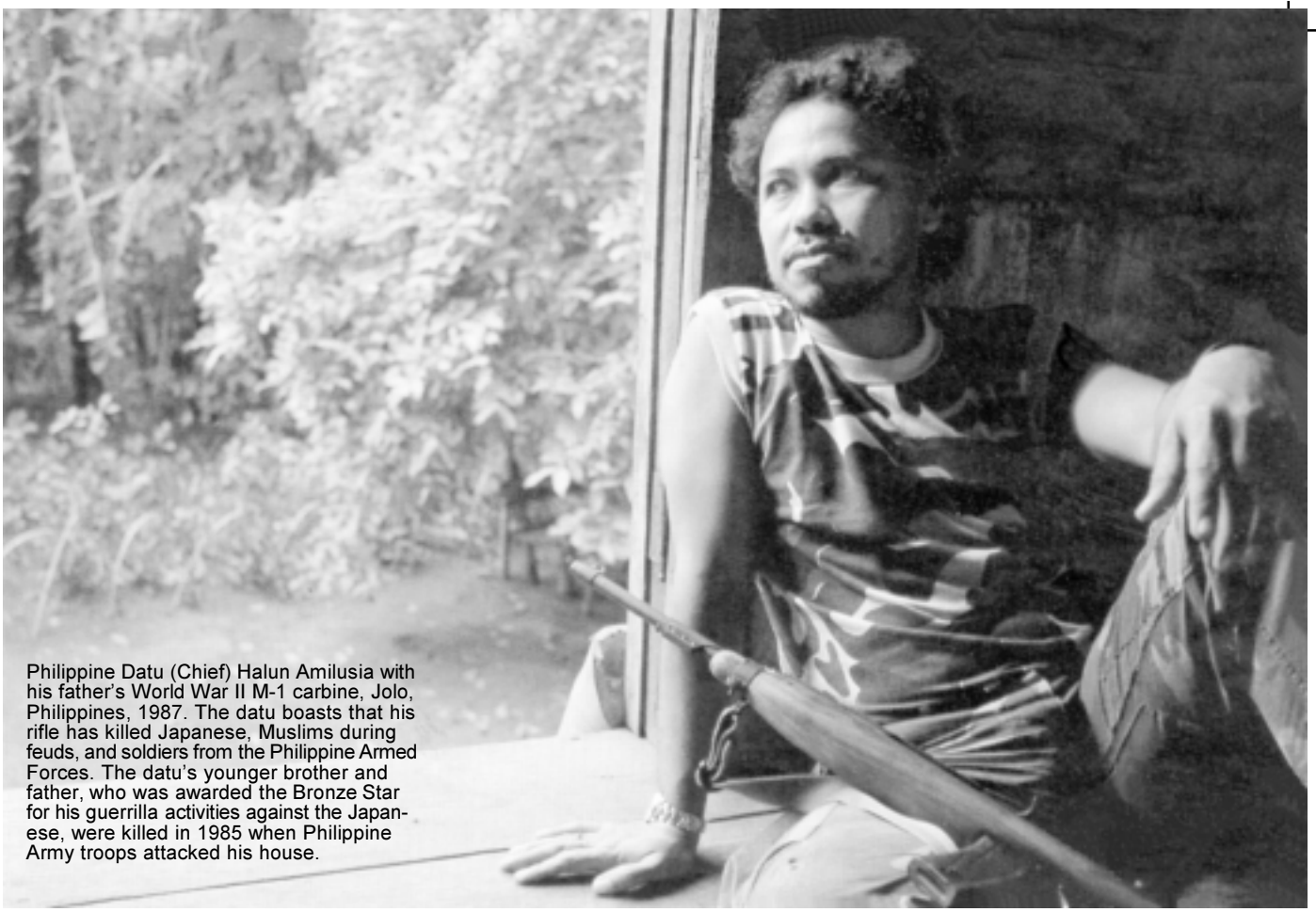
The reported ties between Osama bin Laden and the ASG date to Afghanistan in the 1980s when bin Laden, like Janjalani, was closely linked to Professor Sayyaf's Islamic Union and fought with their forces.[32] In the post-Afghan war days, bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization reportedly funneled money and other support to the ASG, although the precise nature of the aid is not known. As early as the mid-1990s, bin Laden's brother-in-law, a Saudi financier named Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, was alleged to be one of the principal vectors of funding to the ASG and perhaps other Philippine Muslim insurgent groups as well. Through an Islamic charity in the Philippines, some sources have linked Khalifa to a key individual, Ramzi Yusuf, who was involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.[33]

Other funding sources linked to al-Qaeda are alleged as well.[34] Additionally, allegations of mid-1990s plans by Philippine-based radical Islamic groups to blow up 11 U.S. commercial airliners over the Pacific, assassinate Pope John Paul II, bomb U.S. and Israeli Embassies, and assassinate U.S. President William J. Clinton all marked the area as a vector for international terrorism. More recently, the January 2002 arrest of Jemaah Islamiyah militants in Singapore and the Philippines, with ties to al-Qaeda, underscored the existence of continuing direct links and regional ties with international terrorism. The ASG was planning attacks on U.S. and Western Embassies in the region and on the U.S. military.[35]

Substantial training and other ties to Afghanistan evidently endured in the years since the end of the 1979-89 war. In July 2001, a Filipino senator and former Philippine Armed Forces chief indicated that 50 Moro fighters were being trained in Afghanistan. While it was far from clear to which of the three Moro groups the 50 guerrillas belonged, the revelation underscored the robust dimensions of terrorist links and interaction.[36] As the unraveling of the Taliban regime accelerated in mid-November 2001 under the impact of U.S. and Northern Alliance attacks, Moros were reported to be fighting near Kabul with Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters.[37] They are evidently sprinkled among the thousands of al-Qaeda prisoners and dead left in the wake of the successful U.S. and allied operations, even as the U.S.-supported Philippine Army fought occasional engagements and sought to close with the ASG elements and rescue hostages on Basilan Island.[38]

Islamic Insurgency and the Region

As 2001 came to an end, concerns about the ASG were fueled by the prospect of renewed militancy from the MNLF and MILF as they pursued Moro independence. Additionally, the prospect for broadening unrest and uncertainty to other states in the region seemed more likely. In late October 2001, MNLF founder Nur Misauri—his leadership challenged by other MNLF representatives and his position as governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao denounced by Manila's government—quickly indicated his intention to take up arms. According to the government, he met with ASG representatives and with the MILF to gain active allies and orchestrate a general uprising. More than 200 Misuari followers shelled a Philippine Army post on Mindanao with mortars on 19 November, took many dozens of hostages in Zamboanga City, and in resulting clashes with the army, lost some 52 fighters. Some fighters were reported to be former Moro rebels who had been integrated into the army but mutinied over the Philippine



Robert McDonald, *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*

Philippine Datu (Chief) Halun Amilusia with his father's World War II M-1 carbine, Jolo, Philippines, 1987. The datu boasts that his rifle has killed Japanese, Muslims during feuds, and soldiers from the Philippine Armed Forces. The datu's younger brother and father, who was awarded the Bronze Star for his guerrilla activities against the Japanese, were killed in 1985 when Philippine Army troops attacked his house.

The MNLF gained foreign support from Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and from the governor in Sabah, Malaysia, who supplied arms and other aid from Libya as well as training for Moro youths. Bolstered by foreign arms and supplies, by the mid-1970s, the MNLF had perhaps 30,000 men under arms. . . . [By the mid-1980s,] three Muslim organizations sought primacy as representatives for the Moro people, punctuated by low-level clashes, cease-fires, and discussions among their members and the Philippine Government.

Government's treatment of former governor Misuari.[39] Many more MNLF fighters were arrested, and large arms and explosives caches were seized.

While the Philippine Army continued into December to try to pacify Misuari's fighters, Misuari himself fled to Sabah, Malaysia, where it was feared he would use territory and camps there to launch operations against Manila's government. Malaysian authorities detained him on 24 November, albeit in fairly opulent conditions, and the Kuala Lampur Government subsequently cleared him of terrorist charges. He was, nevertheless, deported to the Philippines where he is imprisoned. Fears that Misuari's armed followers, such as the loyal and elite Mutallah force from his days as governor, might try to free him has heightened military and police attention and intelligence-gathering efforts. Misuari supporters also are believed to be planning terrorist strikes in the Philippines as they watch his extradition and deportation proceedings.[40]

The MILF—whose meeting with Misuari took place in Bangkok, Thailand, in October—asserts that it is pleased to see rising tensions with the Philippine Government, having opposed earlier peace efforts. At the same time, the ASG pursues its own enigmatic criminal and radical Islamic agendas. In short, Moro resistance groups' interaction is complex, as is the impact that all of this has on other states in the region.[41]

At a minimum, the perceived Malaysian backing for Moro independence remains a source of tension between Manila and Kuala Lumpur, but there are more serious impacts. The Philippine Moro insurgent movements have increased arms smuggling and alien smuggling in Malaysia and Indonesia. The January 2002 arrest of al-Qaeda-linked militants in Malaysia, who had ties to the Philippines and Indonesia, indicates that the full extent of radical Islamic networks is not yet apparent.[42] In addition, the ASG's successes in raising money through kidnapping and extortion are believed to have sparked analogous efforts by pirates and other groups in regional waters.[43] Radicalizing Malaysian Muslims and institutionalizing anti-U.S. and anti-Western

opposition and hostility remain potentials but are limited to the rhetorical and to demonstrations against U.S. strikes on Afghanistan.[44]

Indonesia, as the fourth largest state in the world and the largest Muslim country, is particularly concerned about radical Islam and terrorism. More than 85 percent of Indonesia's 210 million people are Muslim; about 5 percent are Christian, and about 1 percent is Buddhist and Hindu. While the East Timor experience is said to have reenergized the Philippine Moros in their secessionist efforts, it is recognized that inspiration flows both ways.[45] The presence of al-Qaeda cells in Indonesia was suspected and discussed well before their attacks of 11 September 2001 against the United States. Attacks against U.S. interests there sparked U.S. State Department warnings and increased embassy security.[46]

More recently, Indonesian intelligence chief Lieutenant General Abdullah Hendropriyono charged that al-Qaeda camps and those of other foreign terrorist groups exist on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island. While Hendropriyono said that camps had remained largely inactive since their establishment, he indicated that al-Qaeda representatives, other foreigners, and local militants were fueling Muslim-Christian conflict there.[47] A number of groups in Indonesia have extremist agendas, including the Islamic Defenders' Front and the militant Laskar Jihad. A former mujahideen veteran of the 1979-89 Soviet-Afghan war who has sent many local youths to wage war against Christians in the Moluccas and the Central Sulawesi province leads the Laskar Jihad.[48] The group reportedly has nearly a dozen commanders with Afghan war experience. While these radical groups deny al-Qaeda ties, their radical activities and continuing involvement in the Sulawesi problems suggest otherwise.

Overall, however, membership in such radical Islamic groups is still relatively small. The extent to which these groups will be able to mobilize new members to undertake regional versions of jihad in today's environment is the issue that concerns regional governments and the United States.[49] Recent revelations about al-Qaeda-linked militants arrested in Singapore—well-known for its strict law enforcement and other controls—were particularly unpleasant. Such revelations suggest to specialists and media commentators alike that the potential for al-Qaeda and other radical Islamic groups to gain footholds amidst the disarray of Indonesia is a most serious consideration.[50]

From the late 13th century to the age of the Internet, Moro goals, identity, and coherence as a people have remained largely intact. Now constituting about 5 percent of the Filipino population, their goal of independence—or at least greater autonomy and a more equitable share of opportunity and national resources—remains a powerful imperative. As one sympathetic Filipino commentator put it, the continuing Moro armed struggle is "founded on an historical perception that Manila's Imperial Government is out on a systematic pattern for the extirpation of Islam in the Philippines."[51] Whatever the merits of this perception, enduring economic marginalization and decades of government policies considered to be hostile by many south Philippine Muslims have fueled an active insurgency.

The Philippine Government's military efforts to deal with guerrillas have led to charges of human rights abuses and unwarranted militarization.[52] As 2002 began, the Philippine Army asserted that it must substantially increase the size of its forces by 40 battalions to deal with the threat of southern Muslim guerrillas and communist insurgents operating in areas farther north. Together, these Muslim and communist guerrillas are estimated to total about 25,000 fighters.[53] At the same time, Muslim insurgents are seeking new recruits, funding, and allies, a cycle that suggests the prospect of increased confrontation in the Philippines and possibly provides a catalyst for broader armed conflict in the region.

The new factor in the Philippines, and in the region, is the introduction of a far more radical form of Islam backed by international adherents. While the ASG may now be both a criminal enterprise and an ideologically motivated insurgent group, the message of Islamic extremism in populations seeing little prospect for material improvement could be especially seductive. Traditional Moro independence groups, militants, and armed insurgents may become radicalized. Regional commentators, including those in Indonesia, continue to echo the fear that "radicals might eventually attract the economically dispossessed."[54] Indeed, by late January 2002, there were increasing reports of ties among the ASG, the MNLF, and the MILF. The well-regarded *Manila Times* cited Philippine military intelligence reports that MNLF and MILF insurgents had "linked up with Abu Sayyaf rebels in Basilan."[55] Should this report prove correct and indicate an enduring relationship, it would mean far more serious problems for Philippine military operations.

U.S. policy in the Philippines recognizes two requirements: to support the Philippine Government's military effort to deal with the immediate threat of terrorism and to meet the longer-term problem of endemic poverty and marginalization that feeds instability. U.S. military assistance has thus far been confined to materiel support and deploying Special

Forces trainers and other advisers, with the possibility of more active U.S. participation having been raised in government-to-government discussions. The likelihood of strong opposition to a more assertive U.S. combat role may limit options in this regard.

Presidents Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Bush both agreed that sustainable peace would depend on how well economic and social problems could be addressed, and the United States has pledged to double economic aid for key southern Philippine areas. This assistance will support the integration of former combatants into the economy in an effort to create an "environment that is attractive for investment, job creation and economic progress and providing improved public services."[56] The impact of these longer-term programs—and the scope and scale of military activity—will depend on the dangerous months ahead when leaders and populations in the Philippines determine which paths to take. ***MR***

NOTES

1. "Philippines: Washington Ready to Increase Military Assistance to Manila," *Defense News*, 12 November 2001; Bush's statements broadcast on Quezon City GMA 7 Television, 21 November 2001, as translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), SEP20011121000096; James Hookway, "U.S. Faces Complex Ethic Conflicts Fighting Terrorism in the Philippines," *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 January 2002.
2. Robert Maulana Alonto, "Four Centuries of Jihad Underpinning the Bangsamoro Muslims' Struggle for Freedom," on the MILF Internet site at <www.luwaran.com/alonto.htm>.
3. Converts to Islam were from the same racial lineage as those residing in the Christian north.
4. Madge Kho, "100 Years of Moro Resistance: A Chronology of Historical Events," at <www.phil-am-war.org/moro_chrono.htm>; Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000).
5. Ibid.
6. Alonto.
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8. Vic Hurley, *The Swish of the Kris* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1936), 223, at <www.bakbak.com/swishkb.htm>.
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13. Tony Dedal, "Juramentado and Americans," *eManila News*, 22 September 2001, received via Internet.
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22. *U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Saudi Arabia* (Washington, DC: Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 9 September 1999) at <www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_saudiara99.html>. Wahabis are Sunni Muslims, as are Moros. In Saudi Arabia, other Muslim orders, such as the Shia'a minority, are the object of "officially sanctioned political and economic discrimination."
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